JUDAISM AND HELLENISM: INFLUENCE THROUGH THE FIRST CENTURY A.D.

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University, Fullerton

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
History

By
Harry E. Desmond

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ABSTRACT

The scope of this study covers the period of approximately 360 B.C. through the first century A.D., surveying the Judaic effects resulting from cultural pollination with Hellenism.

Cultural influence of Hellenism affected Judaism in numerous areas. Judaic scripture was the primary recipient. Talmudic interpretations, ritual practices and language absorbed the Hellenistic trends and practices. Certain aspects of Greek wisdom influenced Judaic Law.

The results of this study suggest that Hellenism orchestrated a creative role in influencing Judaism, but the structure of Judaism was such that any doctrinal alteration or significant change in Judaism was thwarted.

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If our beliefs about a situation are mistaken, we may see what is not there, or fail to see what is there. But if one wants to grasp something as it really is, then one must take every step to obtain a clear and striking impression.

Cicero

De natura deorum

CHAPTER I

JEWISH SECTS IN PALESTINE: FIRST CENTURY A.D.

Bond of Judaism to YAHWEH

A stillness stretches across the sun-baked land. The participants have departed, leaving only ruins to trace the toil and creativity of Judaism in its eternal quest for the truth and knowledge of the living YAHWEH. The soothing search strengthens the soul by combining identity with the past to the present. The prisms of human interaction, the pyramids of progress that interlace the past and present is the Torah.

Early leaders crystalized the need to reaffirm the bonds. They fully understood the ramifications of integrating their people with other cultures. They realized that Judaism was just a sand castle molded by divine talent of YAHWEH, and that it must be eternally reinforced against the ebbing and shifting tides of exterior forces, or it should again become one with the sandy shore of humanity. Segregation of their people and culture was the only way to effectively keep their holy covenant with YAHWEH.

> Thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God, for the Lord thy God has chosen thee to be his own treasure out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.[1]

This holy covenant permeated the whole span of Judaic evolution from the days of Abraham to Moses and Exodus, providing a bond that united YAHWEH to the people and religion. It was this living heritage of Judaism that enabled Israel to excise itself from its allotheistic environment and seek to build on a firm religious base.

In separateness, the Jewish people found their destiny. The maelstrom of existence was continually pressing. They sought to pursue the holy covenant according to the principles of the Torah. Survival in this morass of savage ebullition was the avenue of the Judaic movement. From the coastal shore to Mount Carmel, rising to the western highlands of Galilee, Samaria, Judaea and Idumaea was the recognition that there was strength in separateness. External survival was too delicate. To avert the total evisceration of its precepts and people, the Jews became, in the words ascribed to Balaam, "A people that dwells alone, that has not made itself one with the nations."[2] Judaic thought and traditions developed inwardly and survived, cushioning the violent turmoil and stifling any dramatic inroads into Judaism that would negate its original concepts.

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[1] Deu. 7:6.

The Land

The area in which Judaism was nurtured is represented by contrasting topological differences. Encompassing the ancient village of Jerusalem is broken tableland that covers a small plateau of approximately five hundred and twenty square miles. It rises three thousand feet to a barren, rain-scorched moorland, in which stark penetrating light dances among the stony, angular gorges hewed out by primordial earth movements.

Extending westward, there are weather-buffed limestone hills that descend onto the Mediterranean plain. To the east, the rounded hills retire into the Jordan valley and Dead Sea. The area recommends itself to a stoic individuality that concurred with the various indigenous populations which occupied the land. It was an area where seemingly endless hostile parochialisms flourished.[3] Hostilities among the peoples were nurtured and sustained on the bitter taste of ignorance and ingrained fears fueled by a lack of cultural understanding and unyielding religious differences.

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[2] Numbers 23:9.

To the north of Judaea, rising from the plateau, is the highland of Samaria. Josephus described it as a country lying

> ...between Judaea and Galilee; it begins at a village that is in the great plain called Ginea, and ends at the Acrabbene toparchy, and is entirely of the same nature with Judaea; for both countries are made up of hills and valleys, and are moist for agriculture, and are very fruitful. They have abundance of trees, and are full of autumnal fruit, both that which grows wild, and that which is the effect of cultivation. They are not naturally watered with many rivers, but derive their chief moisture from rainwater, of which they have no want; and for those rivers which they have, all their waters are exceedling [sic] sweet; by reason also of the excellent grass they have, their cattle yield more milk than do those in other places; and, what is the greatest sign of excellency and abundance, they each of them are very full of people.[4]

Throughout the early history of the area, the Judaeans and Samaritans were constantly enveloped in cultural and ideological religious disputes. The two factions reached an open division when the Judaeans rejected the Samaritan offer to help rebuild the Temple.

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[3] Michael Grant, *Jews in the Roman World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 4.

[4] Josephus *Wars of the Jews*. III, iii:4.

> Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhadon, king of Assyria, who brought us hither.[5]

Even though the Samaritans were Jews like the Judaeans, Zerubbabel rejected their offer on the basis that the Samaritans were not pure Jews. They were contaminated culturally and biologically by the Assyrian culture.

> Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord; the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us to.[6]

The rejection by Zerubbabel caused a doctrinal sectarian schism evolving into a religious brabble.

Galilee, located in the area north of Samaria, was a rich land with diverse geographic extremities. The northern area, Upper Galilee, was checkered with plateaux girded by hills rising two thousand to four thousand feet, ascending to Mount Lebanon. The Lower Galilean area was more conducive to pastoral settlements.

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[5] Ezra 4:2.

[6] *Ibid.*, 4:3.

woven together with a multitude of roads. Josephus praised the richness of the land.

> ...their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantations of trees and of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation, by its fruitfulness; accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle. Moreover, the cities lie here are very thick; and the very many villages there are here, are everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil, that the very least of them contain above fifteen thousand inhabitants.[7]

Galilee was the most cosmopolitan of the three areas, Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee. Its roads enabled Galilee to enrich itself by commercial and cultural interaction with the surrounding world. Unlike other areas, it was not in isolation.

Bordering east of Israel and extending south was Trachonitis, an area populated by Arab shepherds. At its southern terminus it shared boundaries with the Transjordanian, which included Gilead, Peraea, Bashan, the steppes (Moab and Ammon) and the Decapolis. It was an area of diversity bordering on the Negev and Sinai deserts. Idumaea, an area of Jews grown from Arab stock, completed the encirclement of Israel. It is a land of harsh reality.

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[7] Josephus Wars of the Jews. III, iii: 2.

Israel's indigenous inhabitants tenaciously retained a pragmatic view of life. Their tenuous relationship with the land fostered an individualistic outlook on existence. It was a land of stark existence, a pawn in the path of history. Throughout the centuries Israel has evolved in a sandbox of perpetual violence.

Changes in Judaism

Graphic shifts in Judaism debuted in the first century A.D. Sweeping changes took place; transitions in thoughts and traditions evolved. It was a century which witnessed developments that altered the direction of civilization. A tiny sprout of Judaic thought in the beginning, Christianity blossomed into a complex religion by the end of the first century A.D. The winds of change fostered Christianity, but its early precepts were pocked by "internal differentiation and diversity; moreover, it had created substantial portions of that literature which in the second century A.D. was destined to become virtually canonical."[8] During this period, the Temple and its worship undertook alterations that reshaped Judaism. At the beginning of the first century A.D., the Temple in Jerusalem was a functional, viable, controlling force in Jewish ritual, that was guided by the priestly descendants of Aaron. At the terminus of the first century A.D., the Temple had ceased to exist, crushed by the dominant power of the Roman Empire. The destruction of the Temple precipitated a need to mobilize the teaching of Judaism; consequently, the concept of the rabbi was forged by the anvil of need. Tempered and shaped by the repressive measures of Rome, the Rabbinate suckled on the strengths of Judaism and became ingrained in Jewish life as its guiding force. Within the arena of Roman foreign policy, a change in representation took place. Up to the first century A.D., Herod's sons enjoyed certain royal prerogatives granted by the Romans. A kingship existed under the benevolent Roman guidance. With the death of Herod in 4 A.D., this ceased to be in effect.

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[8] Samuel Sandmel, The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 10.

The first century A.D. was a tumultuous period of decisive reactions. In shifting the rule of the providence of Judaea from indirect kingship to a direct foreign policy representative that held total power, Rome created a conflict with the indigenous Jewish Population. This transition in foreign policy removed the certain degree of sensitivity to problems that a

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resident governor would possess. A governor from Rome, who would not understand the Jewish consciousness, could not be effective. Even though Herod's reign was peppered with war, oppression, earthquakes and famine, he was familiar with the Jewish traditions and thought. He was a person who professed the faith. Viewed as an alien, "the Edomite," a figurehead of the Romans, and facing a unification of the Messianic religious fervor with nationalism, Herod managed to retain a tenacious balance.[9] This Messianic nationalism culminated in the destruction of the Temple and cleansing pillage of the country by Rome. Josephus points out the consequences of the Messianic consciousness:

> Those people were incited to war by an ambiguous prophesy, also found in Scripture, that in this period someone from their land was to become the master of the universe. The Jews applied that prediction to themselves and many sages were mistaken in the interpretation. In fact, the oracle was announcing the kingdom of Vespasian, which had been proclaimed during his stay in Judaea. Anyhow, man cannot escape his destiny, even were he to foresee it. But the Jews either scorned the omens or interpreted them in terms of their own fantasies, until their own ruin and that of their country convinced them of their folly.[10]

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[9] Hugh J. Schonfield, The Jesus Party (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1974), p. 29.

[10] Josephus Wars of the Jews. IV, v: 4.

The pulse of Messianic feeling quickened as problems increased the burden of foreign rule. Many envisioned the moment when the Messiah would appear and form his holy kingdom, relieving the suffering of those who had maintained the Torah Law. Numerous individuals who sought recognition as the Messiah professed the ability to give the sign. The holy action or sign was one qualification for the coming Messiah.[11] Judaea's problems became critical;

> ...the affairs of the Jews, they grew worse and worse continually; for the country was again filled with robbers and imposters, who deluded the multitude.[12]

Roman control was patronizing at its best. The procurators under Roman direction maintained a status quo, not pressing to alleviate conditions of poverty, disease, crime, or living conditions. People burrowed into the protective cloak of Judaism to relieve the festering wounds of life. Persons unable to absorb the psychological weight emerged from the Judaic tapestry proclaiming themselves the Messiah.

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[11] Harold W. Hoehner, Herod Antipas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 205.

[12] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XX, viii: 5.

Of the many Messianic occurrences, Josephus has related specific accounts that reflect the mood of the period. Under the procurator Cuspius Fadus (A.D. 4304),

> ... a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a prophet, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to make any advantage of his wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen out against them, and took many of them alive. They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head, and carried it to Jerusalem. This was what befell the Jews in the time of Cuspius Fadus's government.[13]

Felix, the procurator in A.D. 52-60, crushed two prophetic movements. Jerusalem was filled with certain imposters and deceivers who

> persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishment of their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them.[14]

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[13] Josephus _Antiquities of the Jews_. XX, v: 1.

[14] Ibid., XX, viii: 6.

Sometime later the fervor rose again, and

> there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem, one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said further, that he would show them from hence, how at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down. Now when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen, from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred out of the fight, but did not appear any more.[15]

The force of Rome always imposed a finality on prophetic insurrections, but never used its resources to affect change in the area.

Sectarianism

A manifestation of this religio-political turbulence was a movement towards sectarianism. The origin of the phenomenon of religious separatism existed in the first Jewish Commonwealth.[16] By the first century A.D. the apex of this movement was reached. It crystalized itself into facets, each seeking to follow the true path toward keeping the covenant with YAHWEH.

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[15] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XX, viii: 6.

[16] Leah Bronner, Sects and Separatism During the Second Jewish Commonwealth (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1967), p. 13.

> Holy shall they be unto their God and they shall not profane the name of their God, for the fire offering of the Lord, the bread of their God do they offer, they shall therefore be holy.[17]

To be among the chosen was dependent on obedience to the covenant. The concept of "Though art a holy people to the Lord thy God...[18] was not a fresh concept. Judaism germinated on this special union with YAHWEH. Many examples of this sacred separateness are sprinkled throughout the Bible,[19] lending credence to the concept.

People were convinced that the Last Times had commenced; the Kingdom of God was confronting them. They endeavored to purify themselves with prescribed ritualistic concepts, forming sectarian groups. Each struggled to prepare for the Messiah, who would be

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[17] Lev. 11:6.

[18] Deu. 7:6.

[19] Deu. 14:2,21; 26:19; 28:9; Jer. 2:5.

> ... a righteous king and taught of God is he that reigneth over them; and there shall be no iniquity in his days in their midst, for all shall be holy and their king is the Lord Messiah. For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow, nor shall he multiply unto himself gold and silver for war, nor ships shall he gather confidence for the day of battle... For he shall smite the earth with the word of his mouth even for evermore... He himself also is pure from sin, so that he may rule a mighty people, and rebuke princes and overthrow sinners by the might of his word. And he shall not faint all his days, because he leaneth upon his God: for God shall cause him to be mighty through the counsel of understanding, with might and righteousness.[20]

The sectarian groups were chiseled on the monolith of Judaism. Like a colony of volvox, each community revolved around the core of the holy covenant, professing their own kadosh or kedoshim. Their quest was to "Sanctify yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am holy," which is paraphrased with, "as I am separate so be ye separated."[21] As each matures, it separated from the main colony, retaining those Judaic precepts compatible with its crusade towards kedusha.

The formation of diverse sectarian movements within Judaism was a reflection of frustration hastened by a period of accumulated political, social, and religious flux. Rome was not successful in gaining the trust of the people. Jews consistently thought of themselves as Jews, never as citizens of Rome within the Roman Empire practicing the Judaic faith. Jews conceived of a government based on representing a nebulous alienating force which personified corrupting polytheism. The perturbative tactics employed by the Roman administration failed to quell the unsettled masses. Many groups found the sustenance of their solutions unedible, and withdrew into monastic solitude or became militants professing dithyrambic counter-repressive measures. The fracturing of Judaism prior to and through the first century was an exodus seeking relief from social uncertainties, the Temple, and a government which seethed in a crucible of inactivity.

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[20] Ps. 17: 35-42.

[21] Lev. 11:44; paraphrased by the Rabbis in Sifra (Torat Kohanim).

The Essenes

The Essenes were gathered into the fold of separateness prior to the first century A.D. They chose not to compromise their beliefs and sought to strengthen themselves by spinning off from the infested trunk of Judaic policy.

The Essene origins must be sought during the period of the Maccabean conflict. As the intensity of war failed to subside, many pious men became disillusioned with the narrow view of conquest that the Maccabean followers advocated. When conditions balanced on a pinnacle of chaos, those alienated withdrew to the seclusive areas of Judaea.[22] In Josephus, the Essenes are mentioned during the reign of Jonathan(161-143 B.C.).[23] Their existence is at least confirmed in 161 B.C. Some scholars have indicated an earlier origin in the cloak of the Nazirites and Rechabites,[24] yet an exacting comparison reveals contrasts in Essene doctrine and practices which do not correlate.[25]

In Josephus' discourse on the three main sects, he stated, "The third sect who really seem to practice holiness are called Essenes."[26]

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[22] Leah Bronner, Sects and Separatism During the Second Jewish Commonwealth (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1967), p. 90.

[23] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XII, v:9.

[24] Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. II (8 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 48.

[25] Ginsburg, The Essenes: Their History and Doctrines (London: Routledge and Paul, 1955), p. 16.

[26] Josephus Wars of the Jews. II, viii:2.

Philo referred to the term Essene as being derived from the Greek word connoting "holy one."[27] Their philosophy consisted of blending holiness with everyday life. They affirmed the belief that YAHWEH governed all things and committed all things to Him. Simplicity, solitude, and piety directed their existence.

> The Essenes, live on the West side, away from the shores of the Dead Sea, out of reach of their baneful influence. A solitary race, and strange above all others in the entire world. They live without women, renouncing all sexual love. They eschew money and live among the palm trees. Yet the number of their followers is kept up and day by day renewed; for there flock to them from afar many, who wearied of battling with the rough sea of life, drift into their system. Thus for thousands of ages, the race is perpetuated, and yet no one is born in it. So does contrition felt by others for their past life enrich this set of men.[28]

Within this religious enclave, they practiced piety, holiness, and justice, while stressing the opposing aspects of knowledge and indifference. They were unconcerned with abstract philosophy and logic, preferring to pursue life directed by ethical and moral standards. Love of YAHWEH, virtue and man was their main emphasis, in context with their religious and natural laws, which were studied each Sabbath. The Essenes literally, followed the doctrine, "Let no man go forth from his place on the seventh day."[29] Each action was guided by prescribed rules. Josephus felt that,

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[27] Philo Quod omnis probus liber.

[28] Pliny Natural History. V, xvii.

> ... They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury; for they say, that he who can not be believed withour (swearing by) God, is already condemned. They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body...[30]

The sect was based on a concept of equality before God and man. Their communities consisted of four stages of acceptance into the sect.[31] Equality eliminated obstacles in the path towards fulfilling the doctrines. The Essenes were

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[29] Exodus 14:29.

[30] Josephus Wars of the Jews. II, viii:6.

[31] *Ibid*., II, viii:10.

> ... despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, insomuch, that among them all there is no appearance of poverty or excess of riches, but everyone's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions; and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren.[32]

This communal participation enabled the Essenes to maintain a theoretical balance which prohibited the complications inherent in a competitive system. Their ideals of holiness and observance of religious laws were less complicated in this environment. Daily existence was ritualized and rigorous. Josephus delineated their regulated daily activity:

> And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sunrising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made supplication for its rising. After this every one of them are sent away by their Curators, to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labor with great diligen~~ce~~ till the fifth hour. After this they assemble themselves

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[32] Josephus Wars of the Jews. II, viii:3.

> together again into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over, then every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to enter; while they go after a pure manner into the dining room, as into a certain holy temple and quietly set themeselves dowm...after which they lay aside their white garments and betake themselves to their labors again till evening; then they return home to supper... Nor is there ever any clamor or disturbance to pollute their house...[33]

The fabric of their daily participation was regimented, yet it provided order, while the area surrounding their community was evolving in a vortex of turbulence. Isolation within a communal structure provided security, serenity and a defined path towards YAHWEH's holiness. The clothed "white veil" of Essene holiness was intricately designed, and interwoven throughout the morass of Israel's communities,

> They have no certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places... Accordingly there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers, and provide garments and other necessaries for them...[34]

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[33] Josephus *Wars of the Jews*. II, viii:5.

[34] *Ibid*., 4.

This web of connected communities provided the Essenes with a wide organizational base to disseminate their doctrines, but their dogma was not compatible with normal existence. The Essenes were stricter in the observance of the Sabbath, levitical purity and marriage. Although they did not condemn the "fitness of marriage,"

> They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons' children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning; and esteem them to be of their kindred and form them according to their own manners...[35]

Other Essene communities also existed in which marriage was allowed and the doctrinal interpretation was less severe.[36] Consequently, even though their dogma appealed to those who appreciated regimentation and strict adherence to levitical precepts, this broadened their appeal and stabilized their religio-political activity to such an extent that during the turbulent Herodic period, they presented no difficulty to Herod. He admired them and respected their prophetic gifts.[37] Because they exhibited religious stability and political neutrality, Herod exempted the Essenes from taking a general oath of allegiance to himself. Their previous objection to the oath represented general rejection to oaths on principle.[38]

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[35] Josephus Wars of the Jews. II, viii:4.

[36] *Ibid*., 2, 13.

[37] *Ibid*., 12.

The Essene communities were strewed throughout the entire canvas of Judaic society. Termed a monastic society by some, it is evident by quoting citations from Josephus that Essenism was diverse. They searched for the divine path together, yet worked within the community to maintain sustenance, but also providing it with skilled labor. It was not a religious parasite. Essenism was just a hue in the multifaceted jewel of the Judaic religion.

The Pharisees

The quest in seeking the origin of the term Pharisee rests on critical linguistic interpretation of two terms: pharisaioi and perushim.

According to Bowker, Greek language sources consistently refer to a group termed pharisaioi, while Semitic language sources, especially those of rabbinic origin, indicate groups of people termed perushim. A transliteration of these terms yields the term

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[38] Michael Grant, Jews in the Roman World (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 68.

Pharisees.[39] Lightley lends support to the hypothesis in pointing out the name *pharisees* is derived from the Aramaic *perushim*, and is equivalent to the Hebrew *perushim*. The Greek transcription is *pharisaioi*.[40] Josephus delineates a minute amount of information about the Pharisaioi, even though he indicated his life was primarily governed by their precepts. His account of the Pharisaioi is barren of a detailed account of their organization, nor is their origin or name explained.

Within the religious spectrum, the Pharisees radiated their philosophy across Israel's sands. Pharisaic thought permeated the very strata of Judaism. They were consistent in placing religious principles above secular concerns. To the Pharisees,

> The basic principle of their thought and action was that the preservation of Judaism, that is, of the Law and of the customs of the Father, must be the sole standard for the conduct, of the individual as well as the state. Any deviation from that standard they regarded as treason.[41]

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[39] John Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 2.

[40] John William Lightley, *Jewish Sects and Parties in the Time of Christ* (London: Epworth Press, 1925), p..27.

[41] H. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. I trans. by Rabbi A.B. Rhine (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1919), p. 432.

The basis of the Pharisaic thought rested on Torah and Tradition. Balance of Torah and Tradition advocated by the Pharisees gave them a distinctive character that absorbed their followers.[42] Rather than restrict YAHWEH's Law to the Torah, which would result in a stilted unworkable format as times and situations change, the Pharisees realized there must be a blending to make Judaism relevant to the people's needs. The Pharisees sought to bring the religion to the people; they were innovative by initiating within the Temple service performed by the priests, an interpretation of divine service that the entire people could participate in, independently in their synagogue by means of prayer and study of the Torah.[43] They worked with the people to teach religious practices and concepts, seeking to maintain a liaison with the indigenous populous.

Distinguishing characteristics, in which the Pharisees differed from other sects, are represented in their use of the Torah in combination with Tradition. The guiding influence of the Torah in Judaic life was firmly cemented by Ezra in 458 B.C. Receiving permission to visit Jerusalem with a mandate of total authority in all religious matters, Ezra instituted changes to exterminate the prevailing mood of religious laxity and blatant non-observance of rituals. This prophetic scribe sought to incorporate the "Torah of Moses" into the fabric of Judaic life. Although unwritten traditions and customs existed prior to the time of Ezra,[44] he and his successors continued the practice of interpretation of the Torah when solutions to problems could not be found in it.

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[42] R. Travers Herford, The Pharisees (Boston: Beacon Press, 1924), p. 53.

[43] Leo Baeck, The Pharisees and Other Essays (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1947), p. 19.

This distinctive adaptation to the Torah generated a creative tide that ebbed and flowed through the meandering stream of Judaism. It was the most important advance of Judaism, enabling it to break out and adapt to changing conditions. Scriptural interpretations were later refined by the Pharisees. They promulgated special rules which would govern the process.[45] The Pharisees sought to ingrain religion into everyday activities, thereby tying the people to Judaism.

The Pharisees, representing the living ethnic

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[44] G.F. Moore, Judaism, Vol. I (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 7.

[45] Ibid., p. 132.

> body, could appropriately insist on the validity of the oral law as well. They represented the legal evolution of customs and beliefs which had slowly grown out of the imperceptible changes in national realities from generation to generation. The Pharisees could acknowledge the change brought about through centuries of progressing life as parts of living tradition, reconciling them with the written law wherever necessary through a continuous hermeneutic reinterpretation of the Torah, rather than through its literal translation.[46]

The Pharisees professed a philosophy that originated with Moses at Sinai. Their most salient beliefs evolved from the precepts which Moses received from YAHWEH. Josephus indicated that the Pharisees taught that,

> All souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.[47]

This belief in resurrection was a cardinal doctrine. Their concept of life after death and punishment for those who chose the path of darkness in life was an adaptive interpretation influenced by Hellenistic background.

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[46] Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. II (8 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 37.

[47] Josephus Wars of the Jews. II, viii: 14.

> And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to disgrace and everlasting abhorrence.[48]

They advocated a doctrine of free will intertwined with fate. Man, although influenced by YAHWEH, retained the responsibility of differentiating between good and evil.

Like other sects, the Pharisees were bound by special laws to maintain levitical purity. They required strict adherence to observance of ceremonial purity in respect to food, drink, and clothing. They did not alienate themselves from the common people (Am ha-arez), although they interacted by following precise rules of social interaction. The Pharisees worshiped with the Am ha-arez in the synagogues and the Temple, edifying their concepts about the law, resurrection, free will, and other beliefs.

By following a concept of "Separate not thyself from the congregation,"[49] the Pharisees gathered in the affection and devotion of the people. Josephus mentions the immense influence the Pharisees had with the masses, exceeding that of the king or high priest.[50] They held the public welfare in high regard,[51] and tried to mediate equitable judgements.[52] Pharisaic piety was enriched by strict devotion to YAHWEH, the Law (oral as well as written), and the unrelenting quest to educate the masses into perceiving the Torah as the main component in their life. Their unquenchable thirst for piety elevated them in the opinions of the masses as a viable model. Views rooted in the Torah, cleansed from material motivation, had a special appeal to the people. Even though they aroused the hostility of the aristocracy and the rural landowners, their ethics enabled them to survive while other deviations of Judaism perished.[53]

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[48] Daniel. 12: 2.

[49] Pirke Aboth, Trans. and commentary by Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz (New York: Behrman House Inc., 1945), II: 5.

The Sadducees

In religio-political opposition to the Pharisees, the Sadducees strictly abided by the laws of Torah. They

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[50] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XIII, X:5; XVII, ii:4.

[51] Josephus Wars of the Jews. II, viii:14.

[52] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XII, x:6.

[53] Louis Finkelstein, The Pharisees (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), p. 632-633.

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felt secure that the Torah presented the true path of YAHWEH. The eventual cleavage between the two sects revolved around the literal interpretation of the Torah. They denounced and refused to accept the Pharisaic contention that the oral traditions from Moses and elaborated on by his successors were to compensate for any nebulous declaration in the Torah that failed to adequately resolve a situation. To the Sadducees, the Torah was the Law, the word of YAHWEH, the way of life. The differing views held by each faction towards the Torah and Traditions widened a gap between the liberal Pharisaic and conservative priestly Sadducean conception of the Torah's role in Judaism. As Gutmann succinctly stated, the "Sadducee professed the immobility of the Torah, the Pharisee its immutability."[54]

The rise of the Sadducees and their sectarian controversy was seeded in the time of Judah ben Tabbi and Simeon ben Shattah. Finkelstein pointed out that "opponents rejecting their doctrines regarding another world and the Resurrection of the Dead, appealed to the authority of Simeon the Righteous and Antigonus of Socho." Antigonus' interpretation was unacceptable.

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[54] Joseph Gutmann, "Second Commandment and the Image in Judaism," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXXII (1961), p. 319.

Consequently, they "separated themselves from the Torah," rejecting the Pharisaic tradition and formed a religious pressure group based on their own conception of the Torah's role in Judaism.[55]

Contrary to the Pharisaic belief in the resurrection of the body, the Sadducees rejected this conception,[56] and denied the immortality of the soul. To the Sadducees, "... souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the Law enjoins them..."[57] Strict adherence to the Torah was a necessity. The Sadducees also enjoined themselves from concurring with the Pharisaic belief in the existence of angels and ministering spirits, "for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all."[58]

In a period of increasing strain of "contemporary syncretism and of its major constituents, the Chaldaean astral religion, Parsee dualism and angelology, and

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[55] Louis Finkelstein, The Pharisees (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), p. 767.

[56] Matt. 22:23; Mark 22:18; Luke 20:27; Acts 23:8.

[57] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XVIII:4.

[58] Acts 23:8.

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Hellenistic mystery cults,"[59] this posture by the Sadducean sect weakened their position with the people. Coupled with an immobile conception of the Mosaic principle of "Lex talionis,"

> ... you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe,[60]

and opposed to changes and innovations, the Sadducees imposed a massive pressure on those "chosen people," who chose to follow their prescribed interpretation of the Torah. Sadducean conceptions of human conduct and activities were developed within the parameter of a belief that YAHWEH is unconcerned with man's affairs. Josephus stated that,

> And for the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal; but they suppose that all our actions are in our power, so that we are ourselves the causes of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly.[61]

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[59] Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 43.

[60] Exdous 21:23-25.

[61] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XIII:9.

Even though they claimed their origin from Zadok, the high priest in the period of David[62] and Solomon,[63] and indicated Ezekiel entrusted them with the responsibility to maintain the Temple,[64] their rigid viewpoints and obstinate attitude towards accepting the working relationship of Traditions in the context of interpretation, created an unwavering bulwark that repulsed access to the people. Their stifling of the creative insights the Pharisees followed precipitated their fluid slide into religious oblivion.

The Zealots

Cross currents of dissatisfaction charged by Roman oppression, and economic system in a constant state of critical flux, a strong surge in Messianic fever, and religious parties that molded their policies to conform with the shifting political vortex, fueled discontent among a segment of the Jewish populous. The combination of these factors manifested itself in the Zealot movement, which comprised the radical fringe faction in Jewish society.

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[62] II Samuel:8:17, 15:24.

[63] I Kings 1:34.

[64] Ezekiel 40:46, 44:19, 44:10-15.

Seeking to divorce themselves from the languid political policies of the Pharisaic party, they banded together and attempted to irradicate the Roman control, which they interpreted as the "embodiment of all evil."[65] Their roots are embedded in the religio-political tumult of the period. It was a time in which religious intoxication filtered throughout every fiber of the society, fostering diversity in religious beliefs.

The Zealot movement was seeded in numerous problems which plagued the Jewish society. Baron views their formation as being derived from the economic problems which were "gnawing at the very life of the people."[66] The country was swollen with roving masses of fugitive slaves and dissatisfied free workingmen. They

> organized bands to attack merchants and other wayfarers. Robbery became a permanent feature of the Palestinian life. Even the general pacification of the

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[65] Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. II (8 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 47.

[66] Ibid., p. 46.

> country by the Herodian and Roman armies failed to eradicate the evil.[67]

The entire blame rested on the dominant class in Rome. They supported the maintenance of the unstable condition throughout the Mediterranean, since it provided them with their main source of slave supply. The Roman police action reflected this view.[68]

This is a tunnel visioned interpretation of the origin of the Zealot movement. A situation is never created by one problem. There is always a multitude of factors which spawn a situation. The Palestine area was important to the government of Rome. It served as a link between Egypt and the northern area, and its position was the apex of trade routes throughout the Empire. Persistent economic disorder was not conducive to the future growth and stability of the Empire.

The factors which precipitated the ascension of the Zealot movement are found in the economic, political and religious imbalance that prevailed. It was a land saturated with conflicts,

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[67] Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. II (8 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 46.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

> where a bitter hatred was felt between the rulers and the ruled; where resentment steadily deepened and tension mounted as Jewish intolerance reacted to Roman maladministration. The conflict, moreover was not limited to certain places or classes of society; clashes occurred everywhere, and, since politics and religion were essentially one for a people who deemed themselves a holy nation, the issue concerned every Jew, and none who was loyal to his ancestral faith could insulate himself from it.[69]

Prior to the death of Herod in 4 A.D., the Jews had some insulation from Rome. Herod professed the Jewish faith, although condemned for his Idumaen descent. His actions, not always in the Jewish interest, were usually constructive. He generally supported his religious scruples, even to the point of constructing the Temple.[70] Herod walked a tightrope of political survival. As the pivot of control, he had to maintain an acceptability to both the Roman and Jewish factions. This precarious existence was complicated by the complexity of Jewish thought represented in the multitude of sects.

The delicate strand that linked the Jewish populous with the reality of Rome was severed at Herod's death. Archelaus, who was appointed ethnarch in 4 A.D.[71] was passed over as permanent administrator by Augustus, and banished to Vienna.[72] Coponius was instructed by Augustus to govern the area with absolute authority, while Cyrenius was "sent by Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take an account of their substance."[73] The census, which proceeded the assessment of taxes, was the catalyst that precipitated the Zealot movement. Josephus stated that,

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[69] S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots, (Cambridge: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 26.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

> there was one Judas, a Gaulonite, of a city whose name was Gamala, who taking with him Sadduc, a Pharisee, became jealous to draw them to revolt, who said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty...[74]

The Zealot movement was a nationalistic extension of the Torah. Exodus 19:5-6 set the tone for Judaic evolution:

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[71] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews. XVII, xi:4.

[72] Ibid., xii:1-4.

[73] Ibid., XVIII, i:1.

[74] Ibid.

> If you will harken unto my voice indeed
> and keep my conenant then ye shall be
> mine own treasure from among all the
> peoples, for all the earth is mine. And
> ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests
> and a holy nation.[75]

As the pressures of conquering nations relaxed, this reoccuring theme of "a holy nation" surfaced. The Zealots sought to unshackle the bonds of Rome, and reconstruct a nation according to the tenets of YAHWEH. Their beliefs were in the Pharisaic tradition, but they strictly enforced the Torah. The Zealots vigorously imposed punishments on those who transgressed the Torah law.[76] In a discussion of parties, Hippolytus emphasized their strictness:

> In the course of time they have split into four parties, of which each have their own peculiar way of life. The members of one of these parties lay such emphasis upon the precepts that they will never touch a coin on the ground that one should neither carry, nor look upon, nor make an image. They enter no town, to avoid passing through a gate on which there are statues; for they hold it to be wrong to pass under statues. Members of the second party, if they hear some man discussing God and His Law, who is uncircumcised,

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[75] Exodus. 19:5-6.

[76] S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots (Cambridge: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 44.

> they lie in wait for him, and, when they catch him alone, they threathen him with death, if he will not allow himself to be circumcised; should the man refuse, without compunction, he is killed. For this reason they have acquired the name of 'Zealots'; some call them Sicarii. Adherents of one of the other parties will name no one lord, except God, even if they are tortured or killed. So much have the latter departed from the strict life, that those who have remained loyal to the original customs will have no contact with them; and, should they contact them, they wash themselves immediately, as though they had touched a stranger.[77]

The Zealots rejected idolatry, whether impressed on coins or statues. They believed in the holiness of the Temple as the center of their religion, living with a vengance the Torah Law. They were purists, who unlike the Essenes, that believed in positive action towards living the Torah. Sensing an opportune moment, a crack in Rome's dominance, they grasped for freedom, rejecting the invincible claims of Roman power. They were fishermen on unfamiliar oceans, seeking to harpoon a whale with a toothpick. Rome's resources, wealth, manpower, and governmental complexity were too great a catch to net. Consumed by Rome's might, the Zealots relinguished their struggle to reinstitute Israel a nation of YAHWEH with total defiance at Masada. Yet, in their demise, these Zealots, these people who waged a holy struggle, rekindled the cooling embers of a fire that would smolder until ignited into the flame of the Zionist movement.

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[77] Hippolytus Refutatio omnium hairesium.

L'Enfant: Christianity

Bathed in the light of Hellenism and wrapped in the swaddling clothes of Judaic principles, there rose a movement of reform and fulfillment from the tomes of Judaism. This inchoate change within Judaism manifested itself in the leadership and prophetic teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew born amidst the reign of Augustus and expiring during the rule of Tiberius. Jesus' advowson was not steeped in secessionist trends; he admonished to "Think not that I have come to abolish them but to fulfill them."[78]

Jesus was a man endowed with charismatic charm that reflected the concern of the people. A time of crisis was evident in Israel. Roman occupation and oppressive domination blanketed their society Hostility towards this alien control fermen [illegible] in the decades prior to the revolt in A.D. 66. Th [illegible] were

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[78] Matt. 5:17.

> Forced, as most were, by fear to acquiesce in that rule, their asquiescence was sullen, and they longed to be free of the heathen foreigners who oppressed them by a heavy taxation and other imposts, who oftem abused their persons and insulted their customs, and whose very presence so grievously contradicted their cherished belief that they were the Chosen People of God.[79]

Within this succinctly described tinderbox of religious oppression, many Jews were unable to subliminate their soaring spirit towards a messianic redemption. From this whirlwind of apocalyptic expectation, a leader arose,

> ...a Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, -a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold thes and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.[80]

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[79] S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Cambridge: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 146.

[80] Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*. XVIII, iii:3.

In a visionary stroke, Jesus, a Galilean Jew, swept across the canvas of an inane Jewish monotheism offering a Messiah, a lustrative martyr, a redemptor. Bathed in the Messianic realism of the times, Jesus enabled the Jews and Gentiles to grasp the tattered and torn vestments of a martyr, who professed concepts which could overcome the bonds of Judaism, by impregnating it with a humanistic concern for enrichment of the human condition.

The Christian movement was essentially Jewish in origin, involving Jews who were acquainted with Hellenistic concepts. Their rapid assimilation of Christianity was successful due to its blending of Judaic and Hellenistic views. Early christian missionary zeal in seeking out the Hellenistic portion of the Jewish people gave Christianity credence and stability.[81] Within time, the concepts of Jesus found acceptability among many Jews with the Roman Empire. In conversation with James in Jerusalem, Paul commented that "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they

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[81] Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 6.

are all zealous for the Law,...[82] While initially thriving on the richness of its Judaic heritage, the infant Jewish monotheism gained acceptance with groups of Greek and Roman polytheists. Its mixture of a weakened polytheism in the doctrine of the Trinity, with Gracco-Roman man-worship in the deification of Jesus was part of Christianity's success in converting the non-Jewish segment of the Roman Empire.[83] It prospered in the Hellenized world outside Israel, growing to embrace all mankind within a fold of humanism.

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[82] Acts. 21:20.

[83] Arnold Toynbee, "Introduction," The Crucible of Christianity, ed. by Arnold Toynbee (New York: World Publishing Company., 1969), p. 13.

CHAPTER II

HELLENISM: A LEGACY OF INFLUENCE

Epicureanism and Stoicism in Hellenism

The legacy of Alexander transcended the death and destruction that his armies inflicted upon the Palestinean countryside. In the wake of his military machine there flowed a concept that brought growth to the culture; the impact was felt across its entire fabric. Hellenism fused new life into Judaic concepts of existence.

Hellenism, as a concept, involved more than association with the adoption of Greek ideas, style, or culture by other cultures. Its sphere of importance extended beyond the concept of idiom, custom, or other particulars related to the Greeks. As it evolved Hellenism incorporated mores and values which stretched the mind and body towards limits normally thought unattainable by those who viewed human existence in non-Hellenistic terms.

The Hellenistic age is defined as a period from 331 B.C. (Alexander's defeat of Darius at Gaugamela) to 31 B.C. (Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium). During this time the various cultures in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern areas absorbed the influence of Greek academic's music, art, philosophy, poetry, and politics. The Greek influence overcame major racial, religious, and cultural obstacles. It thrived on adversity because it was syncretistic in its approach to cultures. In making enriching contributions to the cultures, Hellenism strove to attain a relevance over a broad range of social groups, exceeding the range of Platonian and Aristotelian influence.[1]

From 331 B.C. to 31 B.C. the Platonism and Peripatetic tradition established by Aristotle waned. Rising to fill the philosophical void was Epicureanism and Stoicism, along with minor philosophies. These minor philosophies, not strong enough to have a major impact, did add to the total perspective. The new areas of thought, derivations of Aristotelean and Platonic concepts, thrived by abandoning theory for practice. They presented a view of the world and human nature strengthened by empirical observations, reason and an understanding that all men share common needs.[2]

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[1] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 6.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 6.

Epicureans and Stoics assumed that man's inner resources, his ability to rationalize, would allow him to fulfill his needs to attain a happy and tranquil existence. Epicureanism and Stoicism were attempts to rationalize and bring into a balanced focus the changing social and political pressures.[3] Bevan suggests that Stoicism was a pattern of thought "... put together hastily, violently to meet a bewildered world."[4] Yet, Stoicism was developed over a wide time span. The Stoic and Epicurean philosophical interpretations were, by the middle of the first century B.C., firmly entrenched in stilted positions.[5] Epicureans largely followed the precepts of their founder. Stoics exhibited some similarities with Plato and Aristotle. They felt that individual being and well-being would be reached purely by natural endowments, with emphasis on self-critical analysis dating back to Chrysippus and Diogenes of Babylon, who influenced Stoicism, changing it into a complex technical philosophy.

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[3] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 3.

[4] E. Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 32.

[5] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 11.

The philosophic postures of Epicureanism and Stoicism affected the channel of Judaic and Christian development.

Epicureanism

The totality of Epicureanism presented an acceptable platform to the Judaic culture. Acceptance or rejection was not necessary; the two could co-exist. Yet, there were certain characteristics which made the philosophy more palatable to the indigenous population.

Whether borrowing from his peers or stretching his creative spirit, Epicurus was a philosopher who envisioned the universe in moralistic terms. "The only missionary philosophy produced by the Greeks..."[6] attempted to discern the causes of unhappiness in the faulty beliefs of his culture, beliefs surrounding the gods, the destiny of the soul, and the questionable importance of objects in life.[7] Oates perceived Epicurus' philosophy as an attempt

> to rid men from certain besetting fears which tainted their lives, namely the fear of gods which led to superstitious enormities, and fear of death with all its concomitants.

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[6] N.W. DeWitt, Epicurus and His Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1945), p. 329.

[7] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 14.

> Once rid of these fears by an increasing consciousness of what is implied in the view that everything consists of atoms and void, man is able to achieve peace of mind—inner calm and security—which is his final desideratum...[8]

Epicurus urged man to judge pleasures from all angles and reject those which might momentarily be sublime and later painful. Moderation in choice, friendship and a simple life were paths toward an equilibrium of pain and pleasure. Total abstinence from pleasurable sensations was to be avoided, because

> If you fight against all sensations, you will have no standard by which to judge even these of them which you say are false.[9]

Once must know the limitations in life,[10] and be conscious of the fact that "of all things which wisdom acquires to produce the blessedness of the complete life, far the greatest is the possession of friendship."[11] These tenets, guided by his quasi-reclusive existence in

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[8] Whitney J. Oates, ed., The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers (New York: Random House, 1940), p. xvii.

[9] Epicurus Kurai doxai. xxiii.

[10] Ibid., xxi.

[11] Ibid., xxvi.

Athens, metamorphosed into valuable doctrines leading to an inner calm and security.

The Universe in Atomism

To the followers of Epicurean philosophy the universe was a complexly structured unit of precision, composed of atoms unlimited in size. It lacked a termination point, a point which must be judged against another point for reference. Consequently, since there was no original point of reference the universe had no limit, and therefore it reflected infinity.[12] Epicurus' position led to a revival of doctrines professed by Leucippus and Democritus, who purported that which exists was ultimately reducible to 'invisible bodies' and 'space.' The infinite universe, consisting of bodies and space, was a concept re-asserted by Epicurus.[13] Lucretius substantiated this in his tract, De nautra.[14]

Within this universe there were unlimited worlds exhibiting similarities and differences, for the atoms which composed such worlds

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[12] Epicurus Letter to Herodotus, 41-2.

[13] Ibid., 41-2.

[14] Epicurus De Rerum natura, I.

> ...are of such nature that a world could be created out of them or made by them, have not been used up either on one world or on a limited number of worlds, nor again on all the worlds which are alike, or on those which are different from these.[15]

The structure was such that nothing originated from nothing; therefore nothing could be destroyed into nothing; consequently, the universe would never be altered. It would remain in a state of suspension.

Since the universe was unlimited, the atoms were unrestricted. Epicurus felt that to limit the atoms in the infinite void would weaken their attraction and adhesive qualities, reducing the variations and similarities perceived. An unrestricted quantity of atoms could not be contained within a limited space.

To Epicurus, atoms lacked the qualities associated with perceptible things, except shape, weight, and size. Alterations in shape, differantiations in mass, and expansion or reduction in dimensions were not a result of a change in atoms because

> ...atoms do not change at all, since there must needs be something which remains solid and indissoluble at the dissolution of

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[15] Epicurus Letter to Herodotus, 73-4.

> compounds, which can cause changes; not changes into the non-existent or from the non-existent, but changes effected by the shifting of position of some particles, and by the addition or departures of others.[16]

It was in the continuous movement and interplay of the atoms that shape, weight, and size were distinguished. Their attributes were indestructibility and immutability. They functioned merely as components. What was seen was a combination of these physically indivisible atoms arranged in a plurality of void and atoms combined. Created things were the result of an interactive adhesion between compounds of body and void.[17]

The borrowed atomist theories modified by Epicurus gained acceptance in the Greek world. Undaunted by peer criticism, Epicurus built his perception of the universe based upon this doctrine. His system enabled him to explain the structure of perceptions in a way that was compatible with empirical data and, additionally, that was psychologically comforting in that it did away with the need for divine causation and any form of teleology.

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[16] Epicurus Letter to Herodotus, 75-6.

[17] Lucretius i 503-535.

Theology and gods

Raised amidst polytheism in the Greek world, Epicurus continued to support the belief in gods, but denied the influence of these gods on man. They had no role in the affairs of mankind. "It is vain to ask of the gods what a man is capable of supplying for himself."[18] Man provided for himself. All that he attained was the result of his labors. He viewed

> ...the motions of the heavenly bodies, their turnings and eclipses and risings and settings, and kindred phenomena to these, must not be thought to be due to any being who controls and ordains or has ordained them, and at the same time enjoys perfect bliss together with immortality... Nor again must we believe that they, which are but fire agglomerated in a mass, possess blessedness, and voluntarily take upon themselves these movements.[19]

The gods did not dispense human misery or happiness. They were immortal and blessed, but their nature did not correspond with popular conceptions.[20] In a self-regulating and self-sustaining universe man was only responsible for his role.[21] Although gods were not physical objects, they were perceived as images on the atoms of the mind to fulfill ethical function. The gods symbolized the good life, exemplifying the purity in life that Epicureans sought—serenity, detachment, happiness. The attainment of "ataraxia" was the goal in which the ultimate happiness was found. This pursuit of an "imitatio Dei" had deep religious undercurrents.[22]

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[18] Epicurus Fragments of Vatican Collection, LXV.

[19] Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 76-7.

[20] Epicurus Letter to Menoeceus, 123-7.

To Epicurus, the gods were unconcerned with man. They were absorbed in contemplating their own perfection.

> ...the divinity of the gods is revealed and their tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains nor snow congealed by sharp frosts harms with noary fall: an ever cloudless ether o'ercanopies them, and they laugh with light shed largely round. Nature too supplies all their wants and nothing ever impairs their paeace of mind.[23]

In this external blissful existence, the gods were insulated from human prayers, suffering, and needs by their attributes: perfection, self-sufficiency, and self-contemplation. The nature of their existence thwarted any concern. Since any motion would contradict their natures, they were immobile. Their perfection eliminated any need for fulfillment. Thus, the attributing control of nature to the god's deities was absurd.

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[21] Epicurus Fragments of Vatican Collection, XXI.

[22] George K. Strodach, The Philosophy of Epicurus (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963), p. 51.

[23] Lucretius De Rerum Natura. III 14,24.

> For they who have been rightly taught that the gods lead a life without care, if nevertheless they wonder on what plan all things can be carried on, above all in regard to those things which are seen overhead in the ethereal borders, are borne back again into their old religious scruples and take unto themselves hard taskmakers, whom they poor wretches believe to be almighty, not knowing what can, what cannot be... Now unless you drive from your mind with loathing all these things degrading to the gods and inconsistent with their peace, then often will the holy deities of the gods, having their majesty lessened by you, do you hurt; not that the supreme power of the gods can be so outraged, that in their wrath they shall resolve to exact sharp vengeance, but because you will fancy yourself that they, though they enjoy quiet and calm peace, do roll great billows of wrath; nor will you approach the sanctuaries of the gods with a calm breast nor will you be able with tranquil peace of mind to take in those idols which are carried from their holy body into the minds of men, as heralds of their divine form.[24]

Epicurus viewed religion as a state of contemplation, not the worship of a wrathful, avenging group of deities. It was a religion that would lift the human spirit and release him from a doctrine of guilt, fear, and insecurity that conventional worship condoned. The torments of death and hell and natural disasters were conditions of nature.[25]

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[24] Lucretius De Rerum Natura, VI 57-8. See also Epicurus Letter to Herodotus, 76-7.

> No act is it of piety(religion) to be often seen with veiled head to turn to a stone and approach every altar and fall prostrate on the ground and spread out the palms before the statues of the gods and sprinkle the altar with much blood of beasts and link no vow on to vow, but rather to be able to look on all things with a mind at peace.[26]

Spirit of Man: The Soul

To relieve mankind of guilt and fear in life, Epicurus established that there was a complete loss of awareness at death. It was a termination so complete, that "Death is nothing to us; for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us."[27] In denying survival to the personality at death, he hoped to point out the absurdity of rewards and punishment for failing to follow traditional ethics. He attributed the problems of obtaining an Epicurean life to the potential fear of the destiny of one's soul after death. The two main causes of unrest in the mind were the opinion that the 'heavenly bodies' were divine and the fear of eternal punishment or annihilation at death; therefore, peace of mind could only be resolved by eliminating these obstacles. Lucretius expressed that man should be unconcerned,

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[25] Lucretius De Rerum Natura, V 1198-1203.

[26] Ibid., III 861-9; Epicurus Kurai doxai II.

[27] Epicurus Kurai doxai II; Letter to Menoeceus, 123-7.

> For he whom evil is to befall, must in his own person exist at the very time it comes, if the misery and suffering are haply to have any place at all; but since death precludes this, and forbids him to be, upon whom the ills can be brought, you may be sure that we have nothing to fear after death, and that he who exists not, cannot become miserable, and that it matters not a whit whether he has been born into life at any other time, when immortal death has taken away his mortal life.[28]

The soul, mind and body were one unit, each existing separately yet bonded together in life, whose limits are but death and birth. "...the nature of the mind cannot come into being alone without the body nor exist far away from the sinous and blood."[29] As the body and mind are linked, so was the soul because,

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[28] Lucretius De Rerum Natura III 861-68.

> ...our body even it is fixed and seen to be ordained where the soul and mind can severally be and grow, it must still more strenuously be denied that it can abide and be born out of the body altogether. Therefore when the body has died, we must admit that the soul has perished, wrenched away throughout the body.[30]

A soul was composed of fine atoms which acted upon and were affected by atoms of the body. Its sensation relied upon the body's protection, to which it then communicated through sensation. In this compatible relationship, when an appendage was lost the soul still retained sensation; but if the soul ceased to exist, the body lost feeling, as did the soul when the body function terminated.[31] According to Long,

> The soul then...is the 'primary cause of sensation.' But soul be itself can not

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[29] Lucretius De Rerum Natura III 783-86.

[30] Ibid., III 789-93.

[31] Epicurus Letter to Herodotus, 63-68.

> have or cause life...a living being can be constituted neither out of soul alone nor out of body alone. Placed within a body of the right kind, the soul's vital capacities can be realized.[32]

By stressing this tenuous intimate relationship, Epicurus denied any prospect of sensation and consciousness surviving death. His contention allowed mankind a choice without eternal pain. It was freedom unparalleled and unequaled, because it relieved the oppressive burden on mankind's creative spirit.

The specifically mentioned concepts of Epicureanism gave it a uniqueness among the struggling philosophies competing for importance in Palestine. Where others found fallow ground, Epicureanism prospered in a fertile medium that allowed it extension and growth. It succeeded in its teachings because they offered no threat and in general were complimentary to the traditional Talmudic thought, especially those concepts of God, life and man. Epicureanism blended into the Judaic backdrop.

Stoicism

Stoicism also found exceptional strength and acceptance in the Judaic sphere. Its concepts were non-abrasive to the Talmudic traditions.

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[32] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 52.

The Stoic philosophy was concerned with seeking inner calm and peace for mankind. Both Epicureanism and Stoicism shared a common goal, but the attainment of the goal was approached from different postures. Epicureanism advocated a system of partial involvement. Man was capable of rational choice, therefore he had the ability to make choices. Man could distinguish between positive and negative aspects of pleasure and pain resulting from the resolution of problems. A choice was made after a rational, balanced analysis of the situation. This process allowed man a certain free will, a wide latitude of expression. Stoicism was a philosophy of moralism that advocated a practice of total participation in the processes of life as a path toward inner calm and peace. Mankind was a universal brotherhood that thrived on interaction. Man was exclusively a thinking being.

Logic, Ethics and Physics

According to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics aligned themselves to the Platonist Xenocrates' structure of philosophy. The philosophy was trisected into logic, ethics and physics.[33] 'Logic' encompassed theory of knowledge, semantics and grammar. These functions shared an interlocking logos. This logos was their reservoir of subject matter. The logos connoted speech and reason, which acted as a base to reach resolutions involving logic.

A consortium of divine beings, men and other animals, coupled with the physical world, was termed 'physics.' Its function included theology and natural science. The study of nature was a prerequisite to the interpretation of virtue, just as logic and physics were subordinate to ethics.

Ethics, the study of standards of conduct and moral judgement, was of primary concern to Stoics. As moralists, they were practical rather than "merely theoretical moralists."[34] It referred to virtue and acts which required knowledge of logic and physics.[35] To the Stoics,

> ...the most important question in the logic ...—the question of a standard of truth— was decided by a practical postulate; that

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[33] Diogenes Laertius iii, 39.

[34] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 119.

[35] Diogenes Laertius viii,84.

> the fundamental principles of...metaphysics are only intelligible from the ground of their ethics; that for natural science the Stoics did very little; that in their theory of final causes...is explained by moral considerations; even their natural as well as their positive theology bearing ample testimony to the practical tone of their system.[36]

Physics, logic and ethics were separate concepts, yet operated as one. Each relied on the other two to fulfill their function. They were considered as one thing, the composite universe, yet they were interpreted as three entities.[37] Diogenes Laertius recorded the Stoic summation of this interrelated relationship.

> Philosophy, they say, is like an animal, Logic corresponding to the bones and sinews, Ethics to the fleshy parts, Physics to the soul. Another simile they use is that of an egg: the shell is Logic, next comes the white, Ethics, and the yolk in the centre is Physics. Or, again, they liken Philosophy to a fertile field: Logic being the encircling fence, Ethics the crop, Physics the soil or the trees.[38]

They expressed that no single concept could function withour the other two. None was independent of the other; they were interlaced as one. In Stoic teaching, none was taught out of context. Teachers started with logic, then physics, and terminated with ethics. Zeno, Chrysippus, Archedemus, and Eudromus instructed in this manner.[39]

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[36] E. Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics, trans. by Oswald J. Reichel (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), pp. 20-21.

[37] A.A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 119.

[38] Diogenes Laertius vii, 40.

Nature and Deity

According to Cicero, the nature of the universe encompassed unrestricted movements, and "those impulses of conation and desire."[40] Nature was the universe and all the life within it. It was the controlling factor between plants, animals, and man, which gave order to the world and caused life to abundantly flourish.[41] This action or control, the Stoics believed, originated from one source, since everything must have one pure and inconditional cause. The harmony and balance in the world were proof to its existence. Nature was synonymous with God, since it directed all events that occurred on earth. It was the soul of life overseeing with a planned rationality. This rationality existed only in man and nature. That which governed lower animals and vegetation was irrational. The symmetry of the world would not be exact and complete without logos(reason),[42] and only a power inherent within man could affect these results.[43] The logos was found only in man.

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[39] Diogenes Laertius vii, 40.

[40] Cicero De Natura deorum ii, 58.

[41] Diogenes Laertius vii 148.

The Stoics did not deny the existence of God. They felt that the sequence of allusions to a divinity throughout human development was proof of God's existence.[44] Cleanthes postulated four proofs to support the existence of God. His first argument was based on the validity of prophesy and divination; second, "magnitude of benefits which we derive from our temperate climate, from the earth's fertility, and from a vast abundance of other blessings;" third, the impact of natural phenomena on mankind; fourth, the apparent orderliness of the universe.[45] Chrysippus pointed out,

> If there be something in the world that man's mind and human reason, strength and power are incapable of producing, that which produces it must necessarily be

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[42] Cicero De Natura deorum iii 9,22.

[43] Sextus Empiricus Adversus mathematicos ix 75.

[44] Cicero De Natura deorum ii 5.

[45] Ibid., ii 13-15.

> superior to man; now the heavenly bodies and all those things that display a never-ending regularity cannot be created by man; there fore that which creates them is superior to man...if gods do not exist what can there be in the universe superior to man? For he alone possesses reason, which is the most excellent thing that can exist; but for any human being in existence to think that there is nothing in the whole world superior to himself would be an insane piece of arrogance; therefore there is something superior to man; therefore God does exist.[46]

Stoics viewed God as identical with the world. There was no meaningful difference between the two. Their pantheistic concepts held that

> The world is the sum of all real existence and all real existence is originally contained in deity, which is at once the matter of everything and the creative force which moulds this matter into particular individual substances.[47]

The interpretations of physics, logic, and ethics were interrelated and influenced by the logos. Each lent support to the concept of a deity as the ultimate controlling force in the universe. They defended divine providence. Their treatment of religion involved a rejection of sacrifices, temples, and images. They interpreted gods as elements which were the divine creations of one ultimate deity.

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[46] Cicero De Natura deorum ii 16. Refer to pages 16-39 for an extensive treatment of Stoic arguments.

[47] E. Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics, trans. by Oswald J. Reichel (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), pp. 156-57.

Among the early philosophies, Stoicism was unique in that its doctrines were founded on the thesis that all which was perceived to exist was the result of primary force and reason in the form of God.

> For he is everlasting and is the artifices of each several thing throughout the whole extent of matter.[48]

This Divine Being created, ruled, and manifested Himself everywhere. He was

> ...one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus...In the beginning he was by himself; he transformed thw whole substance through air into water, and just as in animal generation the seed has a moist vehicle, so in cosmic moisture God, who is the seminal reason of the universe, remains behind in the moisture as such an agent, adapting matter to himself with a view to the next stage of creation.[49]

A Stoic was part of the universe, retaining a moral independence, and living within the precepts of nature which was in harmony with the laws of the universe and human interaction. By exercising ~~his~~

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[48] Diogenes Laertius vii 134.

[49] *Ibid.*, vii 136.

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religious and moral convictions, he would retain happiness and freedom in pursuing his place in the universe. Only the Deity, the Force, the God could restrict his actions.

The legacy of Hellenistic philosophy did not terminate with the establishment of the Roman Empire by Augustus in 30 B.C.; its intellectual vitality did not reach its zenith before the demise of the Roman Republic. Its powerful influence and contributions to the social, political, and intellectual spheres continued to blossom in the brief season of human development, as it originally flowered amidst the pollination of Greek and Judaic cultures.

CHAPTER III

HELLENISM IN PALESTINE

The People's Culture

Whenever two contrasting cultural forces are destined to seek the same path, neither force will necessarily destroy the other, but there will be an assimilated alteration in the composition of each force. Among the strengths and weaknesses of the other, each will renew its life force, broaden its perspectives and strengthen its qualities. Each will retain those distinct qualities which expose individual uniqueness. Such was the confrontation of Hellenism, which rode the wake of Alexander and his legions, and the complexly structured religion of Judaism.

As the legions of Alexander traversed the varied terrain of the Near East, they carried a complex humanistic philosophy which breathed life into the stagnating refuge of wilting cultures. Yet, when Hellenism sought the path that Judaism had weathered for centuries, it met a vibrant, complex, demanding religious philosophy. A religion in the truest sense was Judaism, yet transcending religion into the quadrant of philosophy, because Judaism demanded of the believer more than devotion to YAHWEH, it required its precepts to be practiced as a way of life. Hellenism reversed this in that it was primarily a philosophy, but in its entirety there were tinges of religion, a seeking of a pure, noble existence in relation to nature. The Hellenism that followed Alexander had reached its greatest magnitude in growth.

Although Hellenism remained relatively stable, with the demise of Alexander, the political flux began. The spread and influence of Hellenism seemed to thrive amidst the intrigues of political life.[1] The continuing contributions, enabling Hellenism to remain a progressive force throughout the ages, were the perpetuation of its teachings through leaders who enhanced the philosophy's strength. The population of Citium, Cyprus, gave Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, while Sidon furnished another Zeno, who was a follower of Epicureanism. Schools throughout the Mediterranean area maintained quality instruction under sensitive leaders. Great personages such as Hasdrubal in Carthage, under Clitomachus, headed the New Academy. Ascalon in Palestine gave Antiochus, an Academy leader; Diodorus of Tyre maintained the Paripatetic school. In Syria, Apamea taught Posidonius, who established a Stoic school in Rhodes. As in Judaism, education of leaders and followers was recognized as a prime commodity towards stability and life.

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[1] Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 37.

Hellenism's impact on Judaism was unique. It did not seek to destroy Judaism; it permeated the Judaic culture as a multi-faceted cultural organism. Hellenism was a complex phenomenon, which could not be poured into integrated categories of political, socio-economic, cultural, or religious compartments.[2] As it crept across the Judaic culture, its ideas and concepts were not without affect.

Situated at the crossroads of trade and travel, Palestine was an area of constant change. As a battle ground for armies, a market place for traders, an avenue for pilgrims, it exhibited a diversity of history. The vocations of the Jews reflected the needs of the society, but it made them more susceptible to the influence of Hellenistic thought and culture.[3]

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[2] Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 3.

[3] Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 17-18.

They and their religion were deeply influenced by Hellenism.[4] Being primarily craftsmen, traders, and merchants, their contact with the outside world brought them in juxaposition with the harsh realities of political and mercantile pressures. To them the thought and life in the Law was known, although it was kept recessed in the dimmed conscience of practicality. There was a mood of change,

> that restless, searching, subtle Greek intellect would penetrate everywhere, and flash its light into the innermost recesses of his home and synagogue.[5]

Many families acquired great wealth by manipulating the taxes through extra-legal methods of oppression and extortion.[6] Even Jews of the Diaspora were affected. Foreign cultures of their adopted lands dominated by Hellenism continued to press influence. Among the populous in court, the market, the gymnasium, and in some synagogues, Greek was the common speech. Its ideas and customs permeated their life. In the synagogue, thoughts and religious concepts were taught through the medium of Greek translations.[7]

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[4] James Parkes, The Foundations of Judaism and Christianity (London: Vallentine, Mitchell and Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 111.

[5] Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 18.

[6] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews XII, iv:1.

Scripture and Beliefs

Hellenism was no threat to Judaism as a philosophy or a religion. In the context of the eastern culture, there was a necessary survivalistic interplay between Judaism and Hellenism. Neither could completely withdraw from the other's influence, nor "remain ignorant of the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Greece."[8] Hellenism was bound by the socio-political forces, while Judaism was linked to the political, religious and mercantile pressures.

There was no reference to Greeks gods in Scripture.[9] Rabbis knew about the heathen mysteries,

> Yet not the slightest allusion is extant in rabbinic literature to the symbols

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[7] Abram Leon Sachar, A History of the Jews (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 108.

[8] Edwyn Bevan and Charles Singer, The Legacy of Israel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 40.

[9] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 11.

> and formulas of the heathen mysteries to their phallic rites and licentiousness.[10]

Palestine was encircled by Greek cities, exposed to their influence. Fashions, speech, building, and sports reflecting the Greek motif were common. At the temples, rituals offering sacrifices to Greek gods were held daily in Philistine cities. The idolatry of the Greek pantheon was repugnant to Jews. The rabbis' reaction to this was nil. They consciously assailed the idols mentioned in the Torah and idolatry in all aspects, yet failed to condemn the Greek gods specifically, or denounce the heathen mystery cults.[11] Rabbis were familiar with Greek philosophies, and, although they did not seek out Greek philosophers, they had some degree of interaction. Social and political pressures required that they be conversant in the manners of Greek inhabitants and philosophies.[12] In view of this, the threat of Hellenism to Judaic concepts was either non-existent, miniscule, or restrained by political demands. The Pharisaic and Sadduccean parties were constantly tussling for power and position.

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[10] Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), p. 120.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[12] R. Travers Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1903), p. 168.

Greek language became a necessity, being spoken throughout Palestine.[13] Within the synagogues and schools Greek translations of the Scriptures became common. As a result, the requirement of learning Hebrew was not stressed in certain areas. There came to be a separation between those who studied Hebrew(the scholars) and the common people, who found it useless.[14] The language was a key to advancement. During Ptolemaic rule, use of the Greek language was a necessity among the upper class and higher priesthood in Jerusalem.

> Greek civilization exercised over many Jews the same fascination it had for other Orientals...Its customs and fashions were imitated, its luxuries eagerly sought after.[15]

The flow of the Greek language into the priesthood, and

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[13] Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 22; Edwyn Bevan and Charles Singer, *The Legacy of Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 39-40.

[14] G.F. Moore, *Judaism*, Vol. I (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 322.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

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consequently into the religion, was natural. As the Scripture-trained Jews became more familiar with the philosophical works of the Greeks, they noticed a similarity in beliefs. They perceived that the philosophers "had risen above the idol-worshipping and abomination-loving heathen."[16] Idols they did not worship, but rather "one God, invisible, immaterial, good, and just."[17] With this freelance mood of the Scribes, the reliability of Jewish Scripture declined. Lieberman indicated that there was virtually no control over the reproduction of texts of Scripture in the early rabbinic period. The various books exhibited variants in their textual readings and grammatical structures. There was no great publishing houses like that of T. Pomponius Atticus in Rome. With textual variation evident it became clear that there was a possibility of Hellenistic conceptual infiltration into rabbinic literature. The "vulgata"[18] of Jerusalem was not the same as that of outlying remote communities.

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[16] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 17.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 17.

[18] Authoritative popular texts circulated among the masses in many synagogues and schools.

Material used to instruct children was of extremely questionable quality.[19] Scripture-trained Jews attempted to show that their God was the god of philosophers, their laws similar to the ethics and politics recommended by philosophers, and that their practices could be explained as being based upon reason.[20] Indications of the latitude of decay in scriptural material were so massive that Rabbi Akiba extolled his pupil, Rabbi Simeon, to teach his son from a revised scriptural edition.[21]

God and Judaism:
The Alexandrian Motif

The cosmopolitan center of Alexandria reflected the mood of the period. It was the center of Greek culture, radiating across the eastern Mediterranean world. Jews living in Alexandria were stimulated by Hellenistic life. Their interpretation of Judaism, sautéed in the crucible of Hellenism, had a different flavor than Judaism in the remote areas. Even though Alexandrian Judaism developed certain local characteristics, it did not completely separate itself from the Judaic beliefs of Palestine, nor remain unaffected by it.

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[19] Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), pp. 20-27.

[20] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 19.

[21] TB Pesachim 112a.

> But in their new environment some Alexandrian Jews came into possession of a new body of knowledge derived from Greek philosophy, and out of this body of knowledge they developed a new method of the interpretation of Scripture.[22]

This new method of interpretation was not limited to Alexandrian Egypt. It spread across the Palestinean countryside in the minds of traders, merchants, pilgrims, and progressive rabbis. In this enlightened vein, various views of YAHWEH emerged. He was portrayed as incorporeal, free of emotion, yet He had a personal relationship to man, who could pray to Him.[23] God was seen to have established a fixed order of nature, but had the power to change it.[24] God was providence, but His was individual; He could reward and punish.[25]

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[22] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 56.

[23] Aristeas Aristeas to Philocrates 192.

[24] Wisdom of Solomon 11:17-20; 19:6-12; 18-22.

[25] Ibid., 14:3-4; 19:13.

Man, in relation to God, was seen in the schematic diagram as a part of nature whose actions followed the laws of cause and effect, but God gave him Freedom.[26]

Man's soul was immortal, but God reserved the right to destroy it as punishment.[27] The Laws of Moses perceived the value and aim of virtue as did Greek laws, but the Law was permanent because it was the best. It was revealed by God; it was divine.[28] These views reflected the influx of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. Alexandrian Jews were aware of the contaminating effect of Hellenism, but failed to completely succumb to the flypaper effect as other previous cultures. They used the philosophy to their advantage. Criticizing the Greek philosophy was not their forte. The duty of Alexandrian Jewish philosophers, and possibly others, was to seek a honing of the serrated edges of the two opposing philosophies by showing that

> ...While the Jews rejected the heathen deities, they were not atheists; that while their laws were peculiar, they were not inhospitable; and that while

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[26] Wisdom of Solomon 1:12; Aristeas Aristeas to Philocrates 231, 235, 237.

[27] Wisdom of Solomon 3:11; 4:19.

[28] *Ibid*., 6:18; Aristeas Aristeas to Philocrates 127, 313.

> their practices were outlandish, they were not superstitious.[29]

Alexandrian Jews were involved with Hellenism to the extent that it influenced their rituals. There were similarities of practice in festivals. "...That festivals like those prescribed in Scripture are celebrated also by heathen..," while "...in the Septuagint the terms used in translating the various Hebrew terms for festivals," were the same to describe the heathenish festivals.[30] The impact and assimilation of these alien practices could not be limited to Egypt. Certainly the Jews of Alexandria were in a unique situation, but they were not isolated from other Jewish enclaves.

> From many hints up and down in the works of Philo, it is certain that among the Alexandrian Jews there existed a system of mysteries, perhaps in imitation of the Greek mysteries of Memeter which were celebrated year by year on the hill of Eleusis close to Alexandria.[31]

The amalgamation of the two entities brought about a religious syncretism of varying intensity,

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[29] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 26.

[30] Ibid., p. 40.

[31] F.C. Conybeare, Philo: Concerning the Contemplative Life (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), p. 303.

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depending on the region. This syncretistic movement,[32] precipitated by Alexander, was continued under Stoic doctrine, which advocated acceptance and assimilation of alien deities into their pantheon by allegorizing all the myths,[33] as exemplified when

> Stratonice, wife of Antiochus I, enriched Apollo of Delos, rebuilt the temple of the Syrian Atarga at Hieropolis and joined a club at Smyrna which worshipped the Egyptian Anubis.[34]

Greeks had accepted this principle as a part of Hellenization of cultures. The concept of theocracy, combining the most different gods in one deity and regarding the names that had been given to them in history as 'noise and smoke,' was nothing new for educated Greeks; the process originated in the remote past of the pre-Christian Hellenistic period.[35]

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[32] An equation or fusion of aone god with another exhibiting similarities.

[33] W.W. Tarn, Hellenistic Civilization (New York: World Publishing, 1961), p. 339.

[34] Lucian De Dea Syria 17, 19.

[35] Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 262.

Variation on God: Jewish and Greek

Although concepts of God in Judaic and Greek reference were similar, they were not entirely compatible. There were factions in each belief that dissented from the accepted views. They were not radicals who advocated revamping their beliefs; they merely saw inconsistencies in portraying God. The Greeks were more susceptible than the Jews to other pantheons. There were consistencies in deities representing basic needs of man. Only the names and rituals exhibited variation. But, in the Judaic sense,

> While with all other peoples in the Hellenistic world the adoption of the name of a Greek deity for one of their own gods meant a religious syncretism, in the case of the Jews it meant only a recourse to the convenience of language.[36]

Many Greeks found the Judaic God compatible with their philosophy, and accepted numerous tenets. In a section of Against Apion, Josephus addressed Grecian attitudes towards YAHWEH.

> I do not now explain how these notions of God are the sentiments of the wisest among

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[36] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 13.

> the Grecians, and how they were taught them upon the principles that he (Moses) afforded them. However, they testify with great assurance that these notions are just, and agreeable to the nature of God, and to his majesty; for Pythagoras, and Anaxagoras, and Plato, and the Stoic philosophers that succeeded them, and almost all the rest, are of the same sentiments, and had the same notions of the nature of God.[37]

Major philosophers accepted the role of YAHWEH as the same of Zeus in their religion, while for the Jews to abrogate YAHWEH would be an abomination. In the letter of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and uncluttered focus on the Judaic God was shown.

> Since, as I have been at pains to discover, the God who gave them their law is the God who maintains your kingdom. They worship the same God—the Lord and Creator of the Universe, as all other men, as we ourselves, O king, though we call him by different names, such as Zeus or Dis. This name was very appropriately bestowed upon him by our first ancestors, in order to signify that He through whom all things are endowed with life and come into being, is necessarily the ruler and lord of the Universe.[38]

Although King Ptolemy took credit for the original title and earlier recognition of God, he also showed an understanding of the Judaic God. But he failed to understand the relationship of YAHWEH to the Jews. In Herodotus this failure realized itself in a quote of Celsus.

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[37] Josephus Against Apion II, 17.

[38] Aristeas Aristeas to Philocrates 15,16.

> It makes no difference whether we call Zeus the Most High, or Zen, or Adonai, or Saboth, or Amoun like the Egyptians, or Papaeus like the Scythians, Moreover, they (the Jews) would certainly not be holier than other people because they are circumcised; the Egyptians and Colchian did this before they did.[39]

In Origin the tune Celsus played was a slight variation.

> [They] thought that there was one God called the Most High or Adonai, or the Heavenly One, or Sabaoth, or however they like to call this world, and they acknowledged nothing more...It makes no difference whether one calls the supreme God by the name [Zeus] used among the Greeks, or by that, for example, used among the Indians, or by that among the Egyptians.[40]

Generally there was an acceptance of the Jewish worship of God, although there was no real comprehension of the way in which Judaic worship was linked in Law. The Judaic practice precluded religious observance outside of the Law. In one form or another the question was always asked, "If the Jews be citizens of Alexandria, why do not they worship the same gods with the Alexandrians?"[41] Whether Alexandria, Rome, or any city in Palestine, the connection of Law was never realized. A related remard by the rhetorician Apollonius Molo[42] pointed to further ignorance of Judaic Law as substantiated by his condemnation of the practice that

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[39] Herodotus I, 131.

[40] Origin Contra Celsum I, 24,5,41.

> We do not admit of such as have different notions about God nor will we have fellowship with those that choose to observe a way of living different from ourselves.[43]

The Greeks failed to realize that all cultures practice some type of segregation, whether domestic or religious. They practiced it,[44] the Lacedemonians accepted the principle.[45] and even Plato advocated the concept of segregation.[46]

Condemnation was not limited to Judaism; they were not secure in their own. Burnet records fragments in which Greeks show a critical view of their own practices. Xenophones found condemnation of Homer and Hesiod, who

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[41] Josephus Against Apion II, 6.

[42] Ambassador from Rhodes to Rome in 81 B.C.

[43] Josephus Against Apion II, 37.

[44] Ibid., II, 37.

[45] Ibid., II, 37.

[46] Ibid., II, 36.

> ...Have ascribed to the gods all things that are a shame and a disgrace among mortals, stealings and adulteries and deceiving of one another.[47]

Plato dismissed Homer because, "He should not destroy the right notions of God with his fables."[48] Heraclitus attacked the veneration paid to images.

> They pray to these images, as if one were to talk with a man's house, knowing not what gods or heros [sic] are.[49]

Heraclitus perceived the mysteries practiced to be unholy,[50] and that

> ...if it were not to Dionysus that they made a procession and sang the shameful phallic hymn, they would be acting most shamelessly.[51]

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[47] J. Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy (London: A and C Black Co., 1952), p. 119, Fr. 11.

[48] Josephus Against Apion II, 36.

[49] J. Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy (London: A and C Black Co., 1952), p. 141, Fr. 126.

[50] Ibid., p. 141, Fr. 125.

[51] Ibid., p. 141, Fr. 127.

The setaceous qualities of Judaism fermented in misinterpretation of the Law, yet separate concepts were ameliorative to the whole. Xenophones found in Judaism "One god, the greatest among gods and men..,"[52] "who is neither in form like unto mortals nor in thought."[53] Many extended the ambit of their thoughts in studying Judaism, as did Pythagoras.

> Pythagoras, therefore, of Samos,., was esteemed a person superior to all philosophers, in wisdom and piety towards God...he did not only know our doctrines, but was in very great measure a follower and admirer of them (Jews)...For it is very truly affirmed of this Pythagoras, that he took a great many of the laws of the Jews into his own philosophy.[54]

Hellenistic Jewish writers saw in the Greek philosophy, as did Hellenists, a sharing of the pathway in reaching God,[55] although the Hellenists' path was through religion, mythology, and mysteries, while the Judaic path was by way of the Torah and the Talmud.

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[52] J. Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy (London: A and C Black Co., 1952), p. 119, Fr. 23.

[53] Ibid., p. 89.

[54] Josephus Against Apion I, 22.

[55] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 20.

The Occult in Hellenism and Judaism

Ever since mankind first faced the challenges of the unknown he has sought to explain it in terms of his surroundings. The occult has played a major part. Through magic, astrology, and proverbs, man has been able to adapt and pass on knowledge in his attempt to comprehend his changing world. In Palestine, the common people, the peasants, the artisans, the tradesmen, the priesthood and court, entertained the use of the occult in varying proportions. The civilized world believed in charms, recognizing in some cases there was cure or an alleviation of the condition. Certainly, in this period, there was no difference between medicine and magic, science and superstition. Judaism could not circumvent the influence of other cultures, including the Greek culture. Although the rabbis outwardly condemned magic, there were allusions to it in rabbinic literature.

A rabbinic approach to the practice of superstitons was to reject them. In the Babylonian Talmud there is mention of Amorite practices[56] which are rejected as forbidden superstitions. In the Palestinean Talmud, R.

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[56] TB Shabbath 67a.

Johann, dealing with healing, cites using anything with a remedial character as long as no magic is involved, even if used by Amorites.[57] But use of the occult is seemingly selective. Ashes are placed upon the head of the bridegroom[58] to avert demons. Catholicism utilizes the practice of placing ashes on the head in a contemporary ritual. Lauterbach indicates that applying ashes is a method

> ...of fooling the demons by making them believe that the people are sad and mourning and therefore not to be envied, is represented by in the ceremonies of putting ashes upon the head of both the bride and the groom, thus making them appear to be mourner [sic].[59]

A Jewish bridegroom puts ashes on his head in order to bear in mind that even as he is married he is a mourner of Zion.[60] The rabbis of the first century A.D. recognized the futility of opposing superstitions; consequently they endowed these obscure ancient rituals with Judaic interpretations,[61] as exemplified by what is believed to be an original religious incantation:[62]

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[57] TB Shabbath VI, 8c.

[58] TB Baba Bathra 60b.

[59] Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "The Ceremony of Breaking a Glass at Weddings," Hebrew Union College Annual, II (1923), 359.

[60] TB Baba Bathra 60b.

> The people swear and say 'By Him Who established the world on three pillars.' Some say they are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and some say they are Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.[63]

The pillar concept was furthered by R. Jose, who said

> ...on what does the world stand? On pillars. The sages said on twelve pillars...Some said on seven pillars... R. Eleazar ben Sammua said on one pillar whose name is righteous.[64]

Twelve pillars might have indicated reference to the twelve tribes, while seven, the days in which the creation took place. The one pillar connoted that the world rests on the strength of YAHWEH. The concept that the world was standing on a table was popular among Jews and Haggadists.[65] In the Tanhuma R. Samuel bar Nahman said,

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[61] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 106.

[62] Ibid., p. 107.

[63] TB Baba Bathra 60b.

[64] TB Hagiga 12b.

[65] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 107.

> ...before the Temple was built the world was standing on a two legged chair, but after the Temple was built the world became firm.[66]

To negate superstitions the rabbis used allegoric application, as shown above, but had to admit the importance and acceptance of them by the population.

In the field of magic and astrology the latter was highly respected. Both astrology and divination were respected professions of importance in extending and protecting the human spirit. As mentioned in the Midrash

> ...'And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom in Egypt.' What, then, was the wisdom of 'the children of the East'? They were skilled in Astrology and divination from birds and expert Augury.[67]

The wisdom of Solomon was so advanced that he was "no way inferior to the Egyptians,"[68] who used astrology and divination extensively, and had knowledge of the "manner of using exorcisms."[69] Practices of heathen cultures in exorcism were utilized by Jews.[70] The posture of the rabbis vacillated from a non-denial of the efficacy of astrology[71] to a compromise between the power of astrology and the proper Judaic attitude.[72]

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[66] Tanhuma sec. 9.

[67] Koheleth Rabba VIII. 3.

[68] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews VIII, ii:5.

[69] Ibid.

There was a homogeneity between Talmudic literature and that of other cultures.[73] A Mandaic reference on dealing with sorcerers,

> And he seized them by the tufts of their braids and said to them: 'Remove what you have cursed.'[74]

conformed in grammatical structure and meaning to references in Talmudic literature, indicating alien mystic involvement.

The Sanhedrin quoted,

> Until he[75] brought up a woman by the

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[70] Acts 19:13-20.

[71] TB Sabbath 156a-b.

[72] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine, (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 99.

[73] Ibid., p. 112.

[74] Mark Liedzbarski, Ephemeria für semitische epigraphik, Vol. I (3 vols.; Gressen: J. Ricker, 1902-15), p. 96, cited by Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 112.

[75] Rabbi Joshua, I-IIc.

> tresses of her hair and said to her:
> 'Loose what you have done,'[76]

while in the Midrash Adkir further cited, "The Holy blessed be He seized its angel by the hair of his head,"[77] and "Michael seized them[78] by the hair of their head."[79] Magic was deeply imbedded in the ritual customs of the people. It was an integral part of everyday life. Rather than contest the validity, knowing that an ecumenical utopia was not realistic in view of the cultural pressures, the rabbis manifested benefit from foreign encroachment on Judaism.

Linguistic Influence of Hellenism

Greek Wisdom and the Law

Hellenistic rule and cultural impact had already affected Palestine for three hundred and sixty years when Jesus entered the religio-political scene. Its inroads reached into the very culture, including the Judaic segments. The Greek language was of primary importance to merchants in bargaining for commerce. Diplomats and scholars used it, as did anyone seeking to scale the social ladder. Treaties were concluded in it; laws were promulgated by it. Greek was a universal language in the Mediterranean world. The spread of Greek in Jewish Palestine was facilitated by the young Jew, who sought to advance himself, and by contact with the Diaspora in Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Aegean.[80]

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[76] TB Sanhedrin VII. 19,25 d.

[77] Yalkut I sec. 123.

[78] sorcerers.

[79] Yalkut I sec. 235.

Within Jewish Palestine an academy was established, with curriculum devoted partially to the study of Greek wisdom to maintain an open dialogue of cultural understanding with Rome, and allow the rabbis to acquire valuable information from Greek sources.[81] Rabbi Simeon, the son of Rabbi Gamaliel the Patriarch, attested that

> There were a thousand young men in my father's house, five hundred of whom studied the Law, while the other five hundred studied Greek wisdom.[82]

Other academies within and outside Palestine surely provided similar instruction, since the Judaic

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[80] Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 60.

[81] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 1.

[82] TB Sota 49b.

population in the Diaspora was versed in articulating proper colloquial Greek.[83] The Greek language was a definitive requirement of public life in non-Jewish cities of Palestine. The possibility of education was not open to every segment of the population, and consequently a division developed. Those who acquired an education had a command of the Greek language; Aramaic became the language of the illiterate.[84]

Assuming that there was a continuous imitating of the various upper stratas of society by those of a lower station, an individual's degree of Hellenization was predicated on his social standing.

> ...The upper class knew Greek literature; the middle class was less conversant with it, while the knowledge of the lower class was limited to the vernacular only.[85]

In conjunction with schooling in Greek wisdom, many Jews adopted Greek names. The Letter of Aristeas listed men with Greek names, Theodosius was mentioned three times, Theodotus, Theophilus, Dositheus, and

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[83] Donald Durham, The Vocabulary of Menander Considered in Its Relation to the Koine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1913), p. 27.

[84] Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 59.

[85] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 21.

Jason mentioned twice.[86] Hycamus the Tobiad, son of the tax farmer Joseph, was mentioned by Josephus,[87] while in the books of Maccabees there was an abundance of Greek names. Fathers of the ambassadors sent by Jonathan and Simon to Sparta and Rome were Numenius, son of Antiochus, Antipater, son of Jason, and Alexander, son of Dorotheus.[88] John, of the priestly family of Haggos, called his son Eupolemus. John had negotiated with Antiochus III for the Jews. Later, Eupolemus led the first embassy to Rome and distinguished himself as a Jewish historian, writing in Greek.[89] A delegation sent to Judas to sue for peace, under the directon of Nicanor, included a Theodotus and a Mattathias.[90] There was mention of two Maccabean cavalry officers in Transjordania named Dositheus and Sosipater.[91]

The heft and vastitude of Greek Wisdom and the Law, taught at the academy, brought them into constant interplay. Wisdom was an important concept in understanding the Law. In the origin of Law was found the influence of wisdom. Formulation of the concept of the divine origin of the Law grew from the notations in Scripture about the wisdom and the Law in relation to each other. In tracing this concept, Wolfson expanded the vaticinating influence of Hellenism.[92]

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[86] Aristeas 47-50.

[87] Josephus Antiquities of the Jews XII.

[88] I Macc. 12, 16; 14.22, 24; 15:15.

[89] II Macc. 4.11; I Macc. 8.17.

[90] II Macc. 14.19.

[91] IIMacc. 12.19, 24.

Law existed prior to man: "The Lord created me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old."[93] ..."with Thee was wisdom, which knoweth thy works, and was present when Thou wast making the world."[94]

The divine origin of the Law was referred to in various philosophic writings of Hellenistic Judaism.[95] In the Aristeas' epistle, the Law was described as oracles of God,[96] a Law of "sacred and divine origin."[97] IV Maccabees elucidated a definition of wisdom with allusions to Stoicism, then identified it as being synonymous with the Law: "This I take to be the culture acquired under Law."[98] Aristobulus recorded a reference to "one of our forefathers, Solomon," as saying that wisdom, "has existed before heaven and earth."[99]

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[92] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 20.

[93] Prov. 8:22.

[94] Wisdom of Solomon 9:9.

[95] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 22.

[96] Aristeas 177.

[97] *Ibid.*, 313.

To the Epicurean and the Stoic the attainment of Logos was an advance towards happiness. The Law indicated that wisdom brought happiness.[100] and it would keep him from the strange woman.[101] The Epicurean and Stoic man was always to be aware of wisdom to achieve happiness. The Law said that man should never banish wisdom,[102] for it would keep him from the evil woman.[103]

Aristotle maintained that man can have wisdom, but defined it as "any science that deals with divine objects,"[104] which was similar to the Stoic view of wisdom. They perceived wisdom was attained by man through his own endeavors.[105]

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[98] IV Macc. 1:16.

[99] Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica XIII, 12, 276b; cf. VIII, 14, 324b.

[100] Prov. 3:13.

[101] Prov. 7:4-5.

[102] Prov. 3:1.

[103] Prov. 6:23-24.

[104] Aristotle Meatphysica I, 2, 983a, 6-7.

Although the rabbis never clarified what the term "Greek wisdom" connoted, an understanding of the Greek wisdom was advantageous to one's association, influence, and status within the Hellenistic circles of Palestine. Jews operating within this Hellenistic structure afforded the rabbis a channel from which to sift the current trends.[106]

> The rabbis did everything in their power to attract the people to the word of the Torah. They drew their material from the vast stores of popular belief; they used it, modified it and offered it to the people in a more suitable form. They made the events related in the Bible more understandable to the man...[107]

Adaptation: Religious Terms

There was a unique interchangeability among religious terms. It was a universal technique of assimilation, allowing one culture to rationalize the acceptance of foreign deities, while maintaining their own cultural identification, and thwarting any diminishing of importance to their respective deities. This technique was not alien to Judaism.

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[105] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 23.

[106] Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), p. 105.

[107] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 114.

Wolfson's study of terms related to Judaism indicated a definite influence.[108] The monotheism' of Judaism connoted an expression of a belief in the unity of God. This attitude enabled Jews to maintain a unique perspective in the interpretation of other religions. Other religions could be viewed as comparative beliefs. This belief in one God did not obscure the fact that other cultures were polytheistic. The Hebrew term Elohim in Scripture designated both YAHWEH and deities of other cultures.[109]

YAHWEH is denoted to be worshipped in a "house"[110] or "sanctuary,"[111] while gods of other cultures are worshipped in "houses"[112] or "sanctuaries."[113] There is a similarity in the use of altars, sacrifices, libations or incense, and priests.[114] The Hebrew terms used to describe these aspects of worship are used to describe devotion to YAHWEH or other deities.[115] Praying and genuflection to YAHWEH or other deities are similar.[116] Yet, though there was an interchange of terms, Jews were continually admonished to have no god before YAHWEH[117] because other gods were "no-gods;"[118] they were "lying vanities."[119] These other deities were "nought;"[120] they were "falsehood,"[121] and "lies."[122]

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[108] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 9 ff.

[109] Ibid.

[110] I Kings 5:19.

[111] Exod. 25:8.

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[112] I Sam. 5:2.

[113] Isa. 16:12.

[114] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 9.

[115] II Kings 10:19; Jer. 44:19.

[116] Isa. 16:12; II Kings 19:37.

[117] Exod. 20:3.

[118] Isa. 37:19.

[119] Ps. 31:7.

[120] Jer. 2:5.

[121] Jer. 2:5.

[122] Amos 2:4.

Other gods were "dead,"[123] mere "carcasses,"[124] and "worthless"[125] "dumb idols,"[126] and so were not to be served,[127] or given sacrifices or incense.[128] The people were instructed that praying was with reward;[129] therefore, they should destroy heathen altars, pillars, and images with fire.[130] With these guidelines to follow, the Jews outside the upper class and the priesthood were structured enough to overcome any serious temptation to adopt alien (Hellenistic) practices in their totality. The priesthood was free to set its own basic parameters of assimilating foreign concepts.

There were common terms used. Yet, differentiation between the term's use and connotation were never obscured. The connotation of the term always exhibited its

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[123] Ps. 106:28.

[124] Lev. 26:30.

[125] Jer. 2:11; 16:19.

[126] Hab. 2:18.

[127] Exod. 20:4.

[128] Lev. 17:7; Jer. 44:3.

[129] Isa. 45:21.

[130] Deut. 7:5.

Judaic origin.[131]

Jews did not hesitate to utilize Greek terms and find application in Judaism, but they were always able to distinguish original connotations as Greek.[132] Among the lower stratas of society, the terms were blended in their acceptance with superstitions, popular beliefs, and traditional teachings, losing their original connotation. Greek terms were used in every facet of Judaism in translating the context of "divine worship, sanctuary, altar, sacrifice, incense, libation, sprinkling, laver, votice offering, the firstlings or the first-fruits for offering."[133]

Philo: Use of Greek Language

Situated at the crossroads of commerce and cultures, Alexandria was a metropolis of people being constrained and enticed by a meine of cultural influence undergoing a metastasis in values and perceptions. Philo, a Jew and scholar, was swept up into this eddy of empyreal change, charged with the idea that the philosophical method of interpretation should blend with the traditional method involving Judaism.[134] The Greek religion and Hellenistic philosophy was of great interest to him, and although he condemned the Greek religion, he did not hesitate in using its vocabulary in discussing Judaic beliefs and practices.[135] Philo was a microcosmic example of an Alexandrian Jew influenced by Hellenism. Perhaps he was a rare representation of the supra-effect that Hellenism held for a few, an eponym of literary religious analysis involving the Logos. In Philo's vasty tomes, pagan concepts exposed themselves. His descriptive allusions and allegories, used in discussing Judaism, fostered an umbrage among the rabbis. His works were not found apt in presenting YAHWEH's word.

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[131] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 10.

[132] Ibid., p. 12.

[133] Ibid., p. 13.

To Philo, the stars were "...the gods which sense discries [sic] in heaven..,"[136] heaven was the "...great visible god,"[137] and the Furies were "...the venerable goddesses..."[138] In his references to YAHWEH, he draws allusions as "...the Lord of gods and men..,"[139] "...the Supreme Father of gods and men..,"[140] "God not only of men but also of gods..."[141] He used a wide variation of "certain stereotyped epithets which in Greek literature are used with reference to other deities."[142] These were commonly used in colloquial expressions. A Greek word was used as an epithet for Jesus. He was referred to as Jesus Ben Pandira.[143] Ben Pandira connoted son of the **Panter**. The term Pandira is a derivative of a Greek word probably used by the Jews in mockery of Jesus.[144] Philo described YAHWEH as "...the God of liberty and hospitality and of suppliants and of guest,"[145] the same qualities applied to Zeus.[146]

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[134] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols,; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 61.

[135] *Ibid*., p. 38.

[136] Philo *De Specialibus Legibus* I, 3,19.

[137] Philo *De Aetermitate Mundi* 3,10; 5,20.

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[138] Philo Quod Omnia Probus Liber Sit 20, 140.

[139] Philo De Vita Mosis II, 38, 206.

[140] Philo De Specialibus Legibus II, 29, 165.

[141] Ibid., I, 56, 307.

[142] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 38.

[143] Also written as Pandera, Pantira or Pantiri.

[144] R. Travers Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1903), pp. 37-40.

[145] Philo Quod Omnia Probus Liber Sit 20, 140.

Philo felt justified in incorporating references of Greek Philosophers because of the similarities found in Scripture.[147] He was a recipient of an Alexandrian Judaism which originated with a

> ...stock of oral traditions and an incipient method of scriptual interpretation, both of which it had brought from Palestine...[148]

In this broth of influences within Alexandria, formed

> ... a new body of knowledge derived from Greek philosophy...a new method of the interpretation of Scripture...[149]

involving Hellenistic philosophical perceptions.

Adaptation: Rabbinic, Torah, Ritual

Reaction to Hellenism among the rabbis fluctuated with the conditions of the moment, but generally they found it difficult to reverse practices grounded in popular beliefs and superstitions that had been adopted by the people. Therefore, they adopted or endowed these practices with Judaic characteristics. In this way they legalized "strange customs which could be tolerated without endangering the vital principles of Judaism."[150]

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[146] Ludwig Preller, Griechieshe Mythologie (Berlin: Weidmann Co., 1861), pp. 958-959.

[147] Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 38-39.

[148] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[149] *Ibid.*

Greek philosophers, scholars, and poets were absorbed into the Judaic motif. The expression 'Siphrey Homeros'[151] occurred in the Talmud[152] and in the Mishnah.[153] It referred to the religious or semi-religious Jewish Hellenistic literature, indicating that Hellenists were familiar with Greek literature. Through them the Palestinians gained an understanding of it.[154]

The rabbis had knowledge of Greek sources. In the Bereshith Rabba siren and centaurs are mentioned. The Midrash describes the swiftness of Asahel: "He used to run on the ears of corn and they were not broken,[155] which shows a striking relationship to Homer's Iliad description of the half-divine horses of Erishtonius: "They would run over the topmost ears of ripened corn and did not break them."[156] Virgil comments on Camilla, also exhibiting similarity:

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[150] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 92.

[151] Homeric writings.

[152] TB Sanhedrin X, 28a.

[153] Yad. IV, 6.

[154] Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 23.

> She might either fly over the topmost blades of an unreaped cornfield and not have bruised in her course the tender ears...[157]

There was evidence that some rabbis who lived in Hellenized centers of Palestine were familiar and skilled in the use and nuances of the Greek language.[158] Rabbi Jonathan of Eleutheropolis was attracted to Greek poetry; he mastered its literary style,[159] and recognized the respective qualities of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Syriac,[160] while another rabbi, Abbahu, head of a rabbinical school in Caesarea, was well versed in the

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[155] Bereshith Rabba XXIII. 6.

[156] Homer The Iliad XX. 227.

[157] Marco Publius Vergilius Aeneid VII. 808 ff.

[158] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 21.

[159] TB Hagiga 15b.

[160] TP Megilla I. 11, 71b.

Palestinian Talmud and in Hellenism. He had a habit of indulging in enigmatic speech based on the double meaning of words.[161] In the provincial towns and villages, the average rabbi's level of secular culture was superior to that of the middle class inhabitant of the country,[162] allowing him to deal with foreign intrusions on Judaic principles. Even with this methodical sifting, Greek did penetrate into the synagogue and into Jewish religious life.

The Greek language, with its ideas, infiltrated every corner of the culture. Even the cloistered Essenes, tucked away on a stark plateau above the Dead Sea, were not immune to Greek influence. Greek papyrus fragments found in Qumran, which include fragments of the Septuagint, indicate that the Essenes were familiar with the Greek language. The overseer of the camp was required to know the languages of the various families.[163] In Caesarea there were Jews who read the Shema in Greek.[164]

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[161] TB Erubin 53b.

[162] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 27.

[163] M. Baillet, ed., Les 'petites Grottes' de Qumran (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 142ff, cited by Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 61.

[164] TP Sota VII. 1, 21b.

Passages in rabbinic literature reflect continuous contact with the Hellenistic world. There are numerous "loan-words" which reflect inter-contact between Jews and Hellenism.[165] Further allusions to Greek influence is evident in prayers. Similarities exist between prayers uttered by common people in the street and ancient Greek phrases.[166] A prayer in Shebuoth; "My God, bring much rain,"[167] shows similarity to one used by Greeks, "My God, my God send one rain, One rain, a gentle rain."[168] Within midland synagogues in Palestine regular prayers were periodically articulated in Greek.[169] It is probable that either in certain areas or under unique conditions, Greek was also used in regular prayers or was integrated into the regular liturgy.

By the second century B.C., knowledge of Greek was part of the aristocratic Palestinian Jews' training.[170] Along with this instruction carried the pollen of Hellenism. Members of the Sanhedrin knew Greek because the Talmud directed "...so that they were not compelled to use an interpreter."[171] The result of linguistic influence of Greek was that the rabbis accepted the importance of the Greek language. They eventually

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[165] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 6.

[166] Ibid., p. 33-36.

[167] TP Shebuoth III. 10, 34d.

[168] J. Grimon, Kleinere Schriften Vol. II (8 vols.; Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1865), p. 448, cited by Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 36.

[169] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 30.

> ...elucidated the verses of the Bible by quoting Jewish sources and sometimes Greek law and literature as well as Greek proverbs.[172]

The Mishnah was under Hellenistic influence in matters of military, legislation, state administration, and trade and commerce, including clothing, household utensils, and buildings.[173]

Although there is no evidence that the rabbis borrowed rules for scriptural interpretation from the

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[170] Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 60.

[171] TP Sanhedrin 17a end.

[172] Saul Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1965), p. 37.

[173] H. Krauss, Griechische und lateinische Lehnworter in Talmud, Vol. I (2 vols.; Berlin: n.p., 1898-1899), p. 623, cited by Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism Vol. I (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 61.

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Greeks, they did assimilate concepts dealing with formulation, terms, categories, and systemization of rules governing scriptural interpretation.[174] The Hellenization of a culture has begun when this happens. The Greeks created the rules; the Jews adapted them to their own qualifications.

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[174] Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), p. 78.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the beginning, the Jewish people have had a strong religious identity, a tenacity for survival that was grounded in the tenets of the Torah. It gave them a social and religious structure to cling to during the many political crises and the constant crepuscular pressures of Hellenism on their culture. The religious strength and belief in their destiny gave them the fortitude to survive as a cultural unit.

Complimentary to the Torah was the geographic area of Palestine. It was advantageous to the Jewish people, because it was an area incorporating a multitude of topological differences that fostered a separateness of stoic individuality. An area situated at the terminous and intersection of trade routes, travel and commerce, a backdrop of numerous altercations among opposing armies, the birthplace of religious conscience for humanity, Palestine was cast in a crucible of turmoil, a heritor of change. In this ferment, the Jewish people found strength in a philosophy of stoic separateness based on the tomes of the Torah. This unique religious evolution allowed Judaism to survive amidst the destructive pressures of alien civilizations occupying their land and subjugating its people.

With the influx of Alexander, Judaism found itself in competition with a viable, complex philosophy of humanism. Hellenism offered a challenge to Judaism and eventually fused new life into it. Although publicly condemned, there was a dulcifying tone to Epicurean and Stoic philosophies that had a subconsious diriment effect on the people and rabbinate.

Epicureanism blended into the Judaic foreground. Its concepts were no catalyst of irritation. Based on an ordered symmetry in a universe of structured interlinking atoms, its peaceful calm of inner-dependence appealed to a Judaism that required an observed order in its practice of daily life in the Torah. Its reflections on rational choice in alternatives, moderation in choices and limitations in life were not acutely offensive. Religion was viewed as contemplative rather than mere worship; their gods were symbolic.

The Stoic philosophy was non-abrasive to Judaism. It had a system of ethics based on standards of conduct and moral judgement which were not unlike concepts of the Torah. The universe was nature. It was changeable and controlled from one omnipotent source, which was a primitive allusion to God, the YAHWEH of Judaism. Nature (God) had a rationality and orderliness of composition. In Logic, the Stoics sought the standards of truth through knowledge, semantics, and grammar.

Although openly rejecting Hellenism, there was a definite consonance between the opposing philosophies reached through varying intensities of antagonism over the centuries. Under the diaphanous exteriors of Judaism and Hellenism was a complex religious philosophy involving a total acceptance of, and daily participation in, their respective dogma. When thrust together, their interaction complemented unseen weaknesses. Each philosophy suckled on the nutrients of the other.

In finality, the ecesis of Hellenism in the Judaic environment was successful only to the extent that the withy rabbinate did not wiffle in their foudroyant perception of the strengths of Hellenism. They took to secern and elutriate those Hellenistic elements, which were either imbedded in the beliefs of the varying stratas of the populous or considered useful, and adapt them to Judaism, thereby nullifying any adverse effects. Consequently, there were numerous similarities, allusions to and use of Hellenistic concepts, wisdom and terms throughout the Judaic Scripture. Language and literature acquiesced to its dominance. Wisdom and Law, religion and philosophy became interlocking components. Rabbinic practices, Torah interpretation and ritual practices absorbed the Hellenistic culture, under the watchful guidance of the rabbinate.

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